AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Claim 45 is amended. The following is the status of the claims of the above-captioned application, as amended.

Claims 1-26 (Canceled).

Claim 27 (Previously presented). A progeny cell derived from a parent cell, wherein

a) the progeny cell comprises at least one gene encoding MrgA protein or a functional homologue thereof and/or a DNA segment operably linked with the encoding gene, wherein said gene and/or DNA segment is manipulated with respect to the parent cell;

b) the progeny cell comprises two or more copies of a gene encoding MrgA protein or a functional homologue thereof; or

c) the progeny cell is mutated with respect to the parent cell;

whereby the progeny cell produces greater amounts of MrgA protein or a functional homologue thereof than the parent cell.

Claim 28 (Previously presented). The cell of claim 27, which produces greater amounts of a protein of interest than the parent cell.

Claim 29 (Previously presented). The cell of claim 27, which is a bacterial cell.

Claim 30 (Previously presented). The cell of claim 29, which is of a species chosen from the group consisting of Bacillus alkalophilus, Bacillus amyloliquefaciens, Bacillus brevis, Bacillus circulans, Bacillus coagulans, Bacillus lautus, Bacillus lentus, Bacillus licheniformis, Bacillus stearothermophilus, Bacillus subtilis, and Bacillus thuringiensis.

Claim 31 (Previously presented). The cell of claim 28, wherein said protein of interest is homologous or heterologous.

Claim 32 (Previously presented). The cell of claim 28, wherein said protein is a protease, a lipase, a cutinase, an amylase, a galactosidase, a pullulanase, a cellulase, a glucose isomerase, a protein disulphide isomerase, a CGT'ase (cyclodextrin gluconotransferase), a phytase, a glucose oxidase, a glucosyl transferase, lactase, bilirubin oxidase, a xylanase, an antigenic microbial or protozoan protein, a bacterial protein toxin, a microbial surface protein, or a viral protein.

Claim 33 (Previously presented). The cell of claim 27, wherein the MrgA protein or functional homologue thereof comprises an amino acid sequence which is at least 70% identical to the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 2.

Claim 34 (Previously presented). The cell of claim 27, wherein the MrgA protein or functional homologue thereof comprises the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 2.

Claim 35 (Previously presented). The cell of claim 27, which comprises at least one exogenous copy of a polynucleotide encoding MrgA protein or a functional homologue thereof comprising an amino acid sequence which is at least 70% identical to the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 2.

Claim 36 (Previously presented). The cell of claim 27, which comprises at least one exogenous copy of a polynucleotide encoding MrgA protein or a functional homologue thereof comprising the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 2.

Claim 37 (Previously presented). The cell of claim 27, which comprises at least one exogenous copy of a polynucleotide, which:

a) comprises a polynucleotide sequence which is at least 70% identical to the sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 1; or

b) hybridizes with the sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 1, under medium stringency conditions.

Claim 38 (Previously presented). The cell of claim 27, wherein at least one exogenous copy of a gene encoding the MrgA protein or a functional homologue thereof is transcribed from one or more heterologous and/or artificial promoter.

Claim 39 (Previously presented). The cell of claim 27, wherein at least one exogenous copy of a gene encoding the MrgA protein or a functional homologue thereof is integrated into the genome of the cell.

Claim 40 (Previously presented). The cell of claim 27, wherein at least one exogenous copy of a gene encoding the MrgA protein or a functional homologue thereof is present on an extra-chromosomal construct.

Claim 41 (Previously presented). A method for enhancing secretion of a protein of interest, the method comprising expressing said protein in a cell according to claim 27.

Claim 42 (Previously presented). A method for producing a cell as defined in claim 27 useful for production of a protein of interest, said method comprising a step of manipulating a cell to increase the expression of MrgA protein or functional homologue thereof.

Claim 43(Previously presented). The method of claim 42, wherein the cell produces greater amounts of a protein of interest than the non-manipulated parent cell.

Claim 44 (Previously presented). The method of claim 42, wherein said method comprises the steps of:

a) identifying a gene from the parent cell that encodes MrgA protein or a functional homologue thereof; and

b) manipulating the cell to increase the expression of the gene identified in step (a), whereby the manipulated progeny cell expresses greater amounts of MrgA protein or functional homologue thereof, than the non-manipulated cell.

Claim 45 (Currently amended). The method of claim 42, wherein the cell is a bacterial cell.

Claim 46 (Previously presented). A method for producing a protein of interest, comprising the steps of:

a) cultivating a cell as defined in claim 28; and

b) recovering the protein.